

THE TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM

The Truth about Islam

QUESTION: Some say that Islam is a Divine Revelation while others say that it is a man-made aberration. What is the correct view, according to Yoga?

ANSWER: When a man makes a statement about something, he must provide some proof to show that his statement is true. So it all depends on proof. We must therefore first establish what constitutes proof.

What is Proof?

Some traditions hold that belief is a form of **Proof**. However, the fallacy of this soon becomes apparent if we consider that a poor man does not become wealthy by believing himself to be so, nor does a liar become a speaker of truth merely on account of his or other people's belief to that effect. Belief is unable to bridge the gap, or establish concordance, between what a person thinks and the facts of objective reality. Yoga, therefore, does not accept belief in a Scripture, for example, as Proof of its veracity, nor does it accept every belief as "religion".

The fact is that a thing is established as being true not by believing it to be true but by measuring it against an accepted standard, or criterion, of knowledge. **That standard or criterion whereby a thing is established as true is called Proof.** In Yoga, such Proof is called **Pramaana**, from the root "**maa**", "to measure or assess" the truth of a given object. Pramaana, therefore, is that standard, criterion or means of knowledge whereby exact, accurate or correct knowledge is obtained.

Yoga accepts three kinds of Proof, or **Valid Means of Knowledge (Pramaana)**, which are given below in order of their importance:

1. Direct experience or perception (Anubhava or Pratyaksha).
2. Reason (Anumana).
3. Reliable testimony (Agama) such as the word of a trustworthy person or Scriptural text.

What do we need to prove?

The basis of Islam is the **Quran**, the holy book of the Muslims (followers of Islam), which is believed by them to have been revealed by God to prophet Mohammad, His supposed messenger. What we need to prove or disprove is whether the Quran was indeed revealed by God. If the Quran was revealed by God, then we must accept Islam as Divine Revelation. If not, then we must reject it as a man-made fabrication.

To begin with, we have not seen with our own eyes, nor heard with our ears, how God revealed the Quran to Mohammad. In consequence, the first and most important Proof, **Direct**

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Experience, must be admitted to be absent. We must, therefore, turn to the next acceptable forms of Proof: **Reason** and **Testimony**.

How and when was the Quran revealed?

It is well at this point to refute some common beliefs erroneously held by Muslims with regard to the Quran. This refutation will be established on the evidence of the Islamic tradition as well as on facts. Its purpose is not to criticise those who hold such beliefs but to throw some light on the matter for the sake of establishing the truth in the same way as an old, dirt-encrusted inscription requires cleansing in order to see what it really says.

1. It is believed by many that the Quran was **"revealed in one day"**. Our investigations have established that this is untrue. The Quran says, "We have imparted it to you by gradual revelation" (25:32). Islamic scholars admit, on the basis of traditional records, that the Quran was revealed over a period of more than twenty years.

2. Many Muslims believe that the Quran was **"directly revealed by God"** to Mohammad. This is untrue. Islamic scholars admit that the Quran was dictated to an Angel of the name "Gabriel" who in turn dictated it to Mohammad: "He is taught by one who is powerful and mighty (i.e., Gabriel)" (53:2).

3. Muslims believe that **"Mohammad himself wrote down the Quran"** as instructed by the Angel (or God). This is untrue. Mohammad could neither read nor write (very few could in those days). This is why the Quran refers to Mohammad as "the unlettered prophet" (7:157). Instead, his teachings were written down by others. Thus the Quran: "It is set down on honoured pages, by devout and gracious scribes" (80:15).

4. Muslims believe that the Quran was **"revealed as it is"** in its present form and shape. This is untrue. In reality the Quran is a collection of verses, written down on various materials such as wood and bone, by various people which were then collected and put together in their present form some twenty years after Mohammad's death, during the reign of King Uthman, or even later. Moreover, chapters are not arranged in historical order but according to their length, beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest. Therefore, they couldn't have been revealed in their present order.

Furthermore, it is generally admitted in scholarly circles that some original verses were later edited either in Mohammad's own lifetime or after his death. The Quran itself says: "When We change one verse for another, they say, You are an impostor" (16:101). Some verses, therefore, must have been changed. One such verse was 53:20 which in its original form approved of the pre-Islamic Goddesses, Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat. Subsequently, however, this was attributed to "satanic intervention".

5. Muslims believe that the present-day Quran is an accurate, even **"infallible, record of God's words"**. This is untrue. As the Quran was first revealed to Gabriel, then to Mohammad and then written down by others, sometimes from memory, there was plenty of scope for mistakes, misinterpretations and other inaccuracies.

6. Muslims believe that the Quran is very clear, very accurate or error-free and **"not open to interpretation"**. This is untrue. The original, complete version of the Quran, which was

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compiled decades after Mohammad's death, was written in an Arabic script that had neither vowels (that is, letters representing the sounds a, e, i, o, u, etc.) nor diacritical marks (signs indicating the different sound or value of a given letter). This in itself leaves the entire text open to a wide range of interpretation.

Let us suppose that instead of "Mohammad" we left out the vowels and wrote "Mmd". "Mmd" could represent "Mohammad" but it could, hypothetically speaking, equally represent something else. The fact is that, while some words are still intelligible without vowels, others are not. This will give some idea of the difficulty in reading and interpreting such a text.

The Quran also admits that some of its verses are clear but others are ambiguous and only God knows the meaning of the ambiguous part (3:7-8). Indeed, it is generally admitted that some Quranic verses are not to be taken literally but allegorically, in which case they must be open to human interpretation and, by implication, to error. Furthermore, the Quran does contain errors, as will be shown below.

7. Muslims believe that there is **"only one Quran"**. This is not strictly true. The official position is that King Uthman selected what he thought to be divine revelation from the records of Mohammad's sayings and compiled it into a single book of which he made five copies. All Qurans in circulation today are said to be copies of these. However, 7th and 8th century Quran texts discovered at Sanaa, Yemen, demonstrate the existence of alternative versions of the Quran that are clearly at variance with the official version in respect of both readings and verse order. Even if there were only one original Quran, the fact remains that most Muslims do not read that original. Various interpretations of the Quran are accepted by Islamic scholars and many more are possible. Translations from the Arabic original, in particular, can significantly vary in tone, style and even content. Most Muslims in the World do not speak Arabic. If they read the Quran at all, they do so in translation. As translations vary from translator to translator and from language to language, so the Qurans, too, vary.

Moreover, there is no universally binding version of the Quran. Translators, therefore, are quite free to take licence in their rendition of the original. In addition to this, the text of a given Quran often depends on the whims of the publisher. For example, if a version of the Quran is meant for a Western public, passages that may appear unpalatable to such a public may be edited out. On the other hand, if the Quran is meant for Taliban-style indoctrination schools, Western-friendly passages may be dropped and anti-Western ones highlighted. To deflect attention from the Jewish derivation of many Quranic teachings, the original "Garden of Eden" ("Jannat Adn") may be translated as "Garden of Eternity", "Jewish Scripture" or "Torah" ("Al-Tawra") may be translated as simply "the law" and so on. In consequence, though the Quran may be one in theory, it is many in practice and the versions thereof that are often in circulation may make a false impression on the untutored (and unsuspecting) reader.

Even if the Quran were one in the absolute sense of the word, it would still be open to the interpretation of each individual reader. After all, reading a text means interpreting it in the reader's own way. If it is claimed that Islamic scholars help readers correctly interpret the Quran, we reply that, there is no way of knowing whether the scholars' interpretation is itself correct.

8. Muslims, especially those who have never read the Quran, believe that it **"contains knowledge concerning everything"**. This is untrue. The Quran does not say how to bake bread, build a house or make a motor car, for example. It doesn't even say how to calculate the seasons: the Islamic calendar relies entirely on the phases of the moon which occur

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independently of the seasons. In consequence, people who want to know when to sow or harvest rice, wheat, etc. must turn to the calendars of other faiths.

9. Many Muslims believe that the Quran is **"the most beautiful book"** in the World. We have found that those who make this claim may be classified into two main groups: (1) those who have not even read the Quran and (2) those who have read the Quran but have not read any other Scriptures. It follows that none of these groups are in a position to compare and make judgements of this nature. Their statement is based not on fact but on ideological indoctrination.

The above are just some examples of erroneous and prejudiced beliefs Muslims hold with regard to the Quran. This clearly demonstrates that there is a great gap between Islamic belief and fact. It also suggests that a similar gap may exist between beliefs regarding the authenticity or falsehood of the Quran as Divine Revelation.

Is the Quran the Word of God?

It is imperative to understand that this is a question which, according to Islamic tradition, Mohammad himself was confronted with. On the evidence of the Quran and other Islamic records (Hadith, etc.) many people doubted the authenticity of Mohammad's prophecies from the very beginning. Indeed, Mohammad himself was, initially at least, plagued by serious doubt. If Mohammad himself doubted his own visions, then we are also entitled, indeed obliged by reason, common sense and the fear of God, to express our own doubts until the truth of the matter has been fully established.

On reflection, it seems wrong for the destiny of the entire human race to depend on the words of just one man, especially when that man himself doubted his own experiences. If we think about it, the Quran may well be right, but what if it isn't? Would we not commit a great sin by accepting a man-made book as the Word of God? Therefore, it is our duty to doubt the words of man and search for the truth of God until we find it. For God is Truth and Truth is God and He can only be found by searching.

Reason tells us that it is wrong to ascribe supernatural origin to a thing when its origin can be explained by natural means. For example, we know that children do not fall from heaven but are conceived by means of human parents. If the parentage of a particular child is unknown, we do not assume that he was divinely conceived but seek to establish who his human parents were.

Similarly, we know that books are, generally speaking, made by man. Therefore, when the authorship of a book is under dispute, reason demands that we first establish whether that book was, or could have been, written by man. If the answer is in the affirmative, then there will be no need to assume divine authorship unless either (a) it can be shown why and how the book should be regarded as divinely revealed or (b) we can directly observe that it was so revealed.

Applying this general principle to the Quran, the question that must be asked is the following: Could the Quran have come into being by natural means such as human agency? If the answer is yes, then no supernatural or miraculous origin needs to be presumed unless we have very good reason to do so.

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The Quran and other Scriptures

To a person who has some knowledge of other Scriptures, the Quran is a surprisingly unremarkable book. Large sections thereof consist of biblical stories some of which are pointlessly repeated, while many verses have no apparent connection to what goes before or after them. Chapters are not arranged in contextual order but according to size, beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest.

The main teaching of the Quran is that those who wish to go to heaven must believe in God and do good works. As this is what all other Scriptures say, it constitutes nothing new. What distinguishes the Quran from other Western Scriptures is its description of Heaven or Paradise as a garden with flowing water and fruit-bearing trees, where believers are married to virgins "untouched by man or spirit" and served by eternal youths. There they enjoy food and wine to their heart's content in the presence of God or a "Mighty King". This must be admitted to be a rather materialistic and bourgeois conception of heaven that reflects the mundane preoccupations of medieval man.

What is evident is that life in the Quranic Paradise bears little resemblance to what is known from biblical tradition. By its own admission, the Quran is supposed to confirm the teachings of the Bible. The Bible however, clearly states that those who go to heaven do not marry. If the Quran contradicts the Bible, as it appears to do, then it implicitly contradicts itself.

What is more disturbing, however, is the Quran's insistence that believers submit themselves to Mohammad, as well as its frequent attacks on polytheism. These attacks are not only baseless, as we shall have occasion to show, but clearly foster an attitude of hostility towards polytheistic faiths which is unacceptable in the civilised world of today.

As far as the claim to divine revelation is concerned, we have been unable to find anything in the Quran that demands supernatural explanation. If we compare it with other Western Scriptures such as the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible, we will find that they have many things in common. For example, they all revolve around a central figure - Abraham, Jesus or Mohammad - who claimed to be introducing a new faith and believed to have divine authority for their actions.

However, neither the Jewish nor the Christian Scripture claims to have been dictated by God. It is generally accepted that they are collections of sayings and eye-witness accounts. In other words, though they may contain teachings that were divinely revealed, they are, on the whole, man-made. The same applies to Buddhist Scriptures. They relate the life and teachings of Lord Buddha without claiming to have been dictated by God. If all these Scriptures are admitted to be man-made, why should the Quran be any different?

Errors in the Quran

There is no proof for the claim that the Quran was divinely revealed. Is there any proof that it was not? Reason tells us that errors such as contradictions, inconsistencies and false claims in a Scripture would constitute proof against its divine origin. So are there any such errors in the Quran? The truth is that the Quran contains numerous errors. For the purpose of the present investigation, the following few will be more than sufficient. We invite all Muslims with friendly invitation to see the truth and judge for themselves:

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1. According to the Quran, Jesus supposedly said to the People of Israel that he has come to confirm the Jewish Scripture (Torah) and to announce the coming of an apostle of the name Ahmad (Mohammad) (61:6). Unfortunately, we have been unable to find any evidence of this whatsoever. Had this statement been true, there should have been some record of it in the Jewish or Christian tradition. After all, the Quran is supposed to be a confirmation of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and everything that is written in it is supposed to be written "in the Scriptures of Abraham and Moses". Evidently, the above verse is not. This must be one of the reasons why Jews and Christians alike rejected Mohammad's prophetic claims. (It hardly needs saying that Mohammad is not announced in the Scriptures of the East either.) As this Quranic statement stands unconfirmed by either Scriptural Testimony (Agama) or Reason (Anumana), it cannot be accepted as true.

2. The Quran says: "The Jews say Ezra is the son of God. God's curse be upon them – how perverse they are!" (9:30). This is a completely baseless accusation. Judaism does not teach that Ezra (one of the prophets) is the son of God nor can its adherents be "perverse" or "cursed by God" on account of that. Given that it has no basis in fact, this verse cannot reasonably qualify as "divine revelation". Rather, it clearly belongs to the category of false claims political and religious leaders routinely and deliberately make about their opponents even today.

As the Quran appears otherwise to be familiar with Jewish teachings, this verse must be regarded as pertaining to the latter part of Mohammad's prophetic career when he had fallen out with the Jews and Christians of Medina on whose support he had counted, and when his main concern was to establish Islam as separate from the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

3. As a criticism of Christian beliefs, the Quran says that God cannot have a son because He has no consort (6:101). The fact is that Christianity does not claim that God begot His supposed son (Jesus) by means of a consort but by impregnating his mother with His Holy Spirit. As this Quranic criticism blatantly ignores the facts, it cannot be the work of God but it must be that of a man with an incomplete and incorrect knowledge of Christian beliefs – in this case, possibly a Jewish or Jewish-influenced person.

Alternatively, it may be regarded as belonging to the same category of deliberately false, polemical statements as the verse considered before. Whatever may be the reason behind such statements, the fact remains that they have no basis in fact. It follows that they cannot be the Word of God which is always rooted in truth.

4. The Quran says that the End of the World or "Day of Reckoning" is near (21:1). This was written one thousand and four hundred years ago yet the end of the World has still not come. God wouldn't say things that are not true. So again, reason tells us that the Quran is not the Word of God. As the same statement is found in the Bible, this again suggests unexamined human influence – possibly derived from a Christian source.

5. The Quran says that idols or divine images should not be worshipped as they cannot take or give anything, hear or speak and so on (35:14, etc.). Surely, this is not the point. The Quran doesn't hear or speak either, yet Muslims still believe in it. Indeed, God Himself doesn't always speak to us. Are we then to desist from worshipping Him?

From a Spiritual point of view, the main function of an image is to concentrate the believer's mind on the Deity represented and establish a Spiritual connection between the two. This was

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well-understood by Hindus and even Christians (who revered statues and icons) long before Islam. See the writings of 4th century Christian saint, Basil of Caesarea and others.

The fact is that prayers addressed to sacred images are sometimes answered, which is due to the fact that they really are directed at, and answered by, the Deity in question and not by the image. Yet because the image represents the Deity, it is, in a sense, involved in our communication or communion with the Deity, however indirectly. What becomes evident is that idol or image-worship really is nothing but worship of God by means of an image.

Moreover, if it is all right for millions of Muslims to worship their idol at Mecca (Kaaba or Black Stone) by walking round it, bowing down, touching, kissing, and praying to it, even though it cannot move or talk or give anything, then it must also be all right for other religions to do the same with their own idols.

As the author of this Quranic passage appears incapable of understanding these facts, it cannot be the Word of God but of a man with strong Jewish or monotheistic influences and little knowledge of Eastern (polytheistic) faiths.

6. The Quran says that there are no Gods besides God for, were it otherwise, "each God would hold himself above the other" (23:91). This is absurd. The Quran first states that the Gods do not exist and then indulges in speculation regarding their hypothetical behaviour, which speculation we are expected to accept as "fact" or even "divine revelation". Well, we won't accept it. Either the Gods exist or they don't. If the latter, stating that much should be sufficient. If the author of the Quran chooses to explain his statements then the explanation he offers ought to be rational and intelligible to thinking men.

On strict logic, any number of Gods could govern each his own parallel and separate creation without ever interfering with one another. Even on the assumption that God Himself were to share the Universe with others like Him, it is difficult to see why He Who is Omnipotent, Compassionate, Just, Good, Intelligent and Supremely Wise should find it difficult or impossible to live in a peaceful and civilised manner with others. This in itself is sufficient to refute the above verse.

The fact, however, is that no religion known to us claims that there is more than one Supreme God. What polytheistic faiths do teach is that the Gods are created by the Supreme Being and live in harmony with each other and in obedience to Divine Law and Order (Dharma). Their relationship to one another and to God is similar or identical to that of Angels in the Islamic, Christian and Jewish traditions. This becomes evident from the Quran itself where it is said that "they call the Angels by the name of females" (53:27). That is to say, **the Arab Pagans worship Angels as Goddesses**. It is clear, therefore, that Angels and Gods are one and the same thing. If the Quran implicitly acknowledges the identity of Angels and Gods, then it cannot deny the existence of the latter.

If the question arises as to why Gods or Angels should be "called by female names", the answer is very simple. In the Western (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) tradition, Angels are admitted to be the Powers of God whereby He governs the World. For this reason, the Arabic and Hebrew words for "Angel" are etymologically derived from, or otherwise allied to, words suggestive of "Power".

The same applies to the tradition of the East. Thus the **Shiva Mahapurana** states that "God (Shiva) creates and rules the World through His Divine Powers (Shaktis)". Now the Sanskrit word

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"**Shakti**" means both "**Power**" and "**Goddess**" in the sense of "Powerful Divine Being". This is because, grammatically speaking, the word "Power" is of the **feminine gender** just like its equivalent in other major languages such as Classical Greek, Latin, German and Russian.

Even the English word "Deity", which signifies the Divine quality, character or nature of God as well as a **Divine Being, God or Goddess**, is derived from the Latin "Deitas" or "Divinitas" which are **feminine** nouns. So also is their Greek equivalent, "Theotis". It is not surprising, therefore, that Ancient Arabian Deities were regarded as female. Indeed, the Arabic word for Spiritual Being or Deity, "Jinn", must be regarded as etymologically identical to Sanskrit "Jani" (woman, wife), Persian "Zana" (woman), Romanian "Zina" (female spirit, fairy), Greek "Gyni", Swedish "Qvinna" and English "Queen".

Ancient Arabian Jinns evidently belong to the same class of Spiritual Beings as the Ganas, Yoginis and Sundaris associated with the Indian cult of Shiva and may, therefore, correctly be described as "Gods" ("Devas") or "Angels" depending on whether we use the Classical designation of such beings or the rejectionist, replacement-theological jargon of later, Bible-based religion.

In reality, of course, Gods and Goddesses or "Angels" are Divine Powers and manifestations of the Light of God. As such, they essentially are as genderless as, for example, a ray of light emanating from the Sun. However, they do possess the power to assume male or female characteristics as and when demanded by their specific function in the Universal Scheme. After all, this is what Gods or Angels are: Divine Powers that can change and act in any way according to the Will of God and independently of human considerations.

In the final analysis, God Himself is not ultimately "male" in the anatomical sense of the word. Rather, He is spoken of as "male" conventionally, in order to convey a sense of authority and power in the same way as we might, in everyday parlance, use the expression, "the man of the house": as a male lion holds authority among the lionesses, a stag among the female deer and a bull among the cows, so God is the "male" **Power Holder(Shaktimaan)** among His "female" **Powers (Shakti)**. To original man, these matters would have been perfectly clear as opposed to his modern counterpart who, having separated himself from both nature and Spirit, has become lost and confused.

We have thus solved the issue of "female Angels" which the author of the Quran seems incapable of comprehending. We have also amply demonstrated the fundamental identity between Gods and Angels: if Western Angels are admittedly the Powers of God, so are the Gods of the East; it is irrelevant whether we call them by male or female names.

Therefore, any distinction between Gods and Angels must be regarded as not factual but conceptual and rejected as a culture-specific artificial construct erroneously (and maliciously) superimposed on Spiritual fact by the religious and political demagogues of the West for the purpose of instigating religious hatred against Eastern faiths.

Even if we were to assume, purely for the sake of argument, that Gods and Angels were not the same thing, the Quran would still be wrong. For the Quran itself admits that there are Angels and Spirits (Jinns) besides God, whom God Himself created. Do Angels and Spirits hold themselves above each other? If they do, this doesn't seem to prevent them from existing. And if that is the

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case, then it shouldn't prevent Gods from existing either. For if Angels and Spirits can exist even if they compete with each other, so can Gods.

On the other hand, if Angels and Spirits do not hold themselves above each other, why should the Gods? Surely Gods can live in harmony under the rule of the Supreme Being, seeing that Angels and Spirits can do so. If even men are capable of living in peace under the rule of another man and a flock of sheep can live in peace under the leadership of the leading ram, can we deny the same ability to Gods who are above both beast and man? Certainly not.

The notion that there cannot be more than one thing because otherwise there would be a conflict between one thing and others of the same kind, is contradicted by both reason and the facts of experience. Nor does conflict or competition between things of the same kind constitute proof of their non-existence.

Had God written the Quran, He would have found a better argument and not such a weak and illogical one! As it is, the above verse represents a facile and fallacious attack on polytheistic faiths that clearly does not stand to reason. In short, it is inconceivable that such verses could have been written by God Who is the Supreme Intelligence.

Our warning is that, to believe that a Scripture is perfect without verifying whether this is actually the case, constitutes a grievous sin. God has given man reason for him to use it and not to rely on blind belief. This is why, in Yoga, we believe that knowledge and not blind belief is the path to Salvation. Blind belief, on the other hand, may lead to Hell even though the believer may not know it.

The Quran is a man-made Scripture

The question that needs to be asked at this point is, "Could the Quran have been composed, either partly or wholly, by Mohammad himself?" If the answer is yes, then we need look no further.

To answer this question, we need to know a few things about Mohammad's background. He was born in Arabia, in the year 570 of the current era (CE), to Pagan parents and was raised from an early age by foster-parents. Most Arabs at that time were Pagans. However, substantial Jewish and Christian communities could be found from Syria in the north all the way to Yemen in the south.

Arabs were traditionally a nomadic nation, accustomed to moving from place to place. Mohammad himself would accompany his uncle, a salesman, on his travels to various places including Mecca, Jerusalem and Damascus, where he would have had ample opportunity to acquaint himself with the teachings of other faiths.

Indeed, tradition tells us that he had several "companions", who may or may not have played the role of religious teachers, such as Salman the Persian (a Zoroastrian-born Christian) and Abas (a Christian Monk). According to some, Mohammad's first wife was Jewish and one of her cousins a Christian monk. One of his female slaves whom he later married was a Christian and he married two more Jewish women who were captured during his battles against Jewish tribes. This demonstrates that if Christian and Jewish sources were available in Mohammad's inner social

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circle, then even more would have been available further afield such as in market-places, temples and other public places.

This in itself is sufficient to explain the large amount of Judaeo-Christian material found in the Quran. It also explains why Mohammad at first chose **Jerusalem** as the holy city of Islam and only changed this to Mecca after falling out with the Christians and Jews who rejected his authority. And it explains why the Quran was revealed to him by the **Jewish-Christian Angel, Gabriel**: in biblical tradition, Gabriel announced the birth of St John the Baptist and that of Jesus, among other things. Although Gabriel did not announce the birth of Mohammad, claiming to be taught by him represents a clear claim to divine authority within that particular tradition.

In fact, the Quran is so steeped in Judaeo-Christian teachings, that accounting for the presence of Jewish-Christian elements in the Quran amounts to an explanation for the origin of the Quran itself.

What is essential to understand is that Mohammad was not a poor, lonely man sitting in a cave in constant communion with God. Far from that. He was travelling and communicating with people from all walks of life and all religious denominations, from an early age. As an adult - beginning from about the age of twenty-five when he married a wealthy widow - he was surrounded by servants and slaves, wives, mistresses, relatives, friends, hangers-on, mercenaries and all sorts of people, including the best scribes, religious teachers, poets and writers that money and power can buy or attract. He was, after all, a very wealthy man towards the end of his life so much so that, following his death, one of his wives was able to raise an entire army in order to occupy the city of Mecca - which itself was a wealthy trade centre.

Even before he married, he must have met Christian priests, monks and missionaries as well as Jewish traders and rabbis, as explained above. In this context, it is noteworthy that the name given to chapter 25 of the Quran is "Al-Furqan". Significantly, "Al-Furqan" is also one of the names by which the Quran itself is traditionally known. Now this word is borrowed from Aramaic in which it means "Salvation". Aramaic, of course, is the language of Jewish Scripture (Talmud) which according to biblical scholars was also spoken by Jesus.

Chapter 18, verse 107 of the Quran uses the expression "Jannat al-Firdaws" in reference to the Garden of Paradise. "Al-Firdaws" is a word of Persian origin that in its Greek form "Paradeisos" occurs in the Jewish-Christian Bible. Quite apart from the fact that the Quran is supposed to be written in "pure and clear Arabic" (16:103) and, therefore, should not contain non-Arabic words, the very presence of such words demonstrates the foreign, in particular, Judaeo-Christian, influence on Quranic teachings.

Indeed, the Quran itself admits to be but a confirmation of Judaeo-Christian teachings: "Before this, was the Book of Moses (Torah) as a guide, and this Book (Quran) confirms it in the Arabic tongue" (46:12).

To return to our question. Could human sources have provided the knowledge required for the composition of the Quran? **The answer, no doubt, is yes:** it is clear that the religious content of Mohammad's teachings is perfectly explainable by the easy availability of such teachings and requires no other explanation.

Interestingly, the following accusation against Mohammad is found in the Quran, chapter 25 (Al-Furqan), verse 4: **"They say, This is a forgery of his own invention, in which others have**

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helped him". We were struck by the fact that this is precisely what we ourselves had come to think of the Quran by the time we came across this verse.

Indeed, in a small town like that inhabited by Mohammad, people would know exactly where Mohammad was going, whom he was meeting and what he was doing – as evidenced by the detailed traditional records of his marital life which appear to have been a matter of public knowledge. What citizens could not directly observe by themselves, would have been swiftly brought to their knowledge through servants, slaves and other informants. At any rate, reason tells us that they must have known something. Given the frequency, persistence and gravity of the accusations, it is inconceivable that these would have been entirely without foundation. After all, there is no smoke without fire, as the saying goes.

It is essential to understand that Mohammad began his prophetic career, properly speaking, at about the age of 40. By then he had been married to his wealthy wife for 15 years, had all his physical and material concerns taken care of and he had plenty of time to dedicate himself to religion. So, could Mohammad himself, either partly or wholly, have composed the Quran? **The answer again, is yes.**

Some historians regard Mohammad as one of the most successful military leaders. As it happens, such leaders often are highly-ambitious and power-hungry men. The fact that Mohammad took the liberty to impose his authority by means of threats and force of arms suggests that he was such a person. This further undermines his credibility: we believe that a genuine Spiritual leader, like Lord Buddha for example, could and should have easily convinced the masses without resorting to violence. On balance, therefore, Mohammad's claims to prophethood seem to us too weak to merit any credence.

In the light of the above, we may safely regard the human origin of the Quran as established. Our verdict on this point is that, like its Jewish and Christian counterparts which have inspired it, the Quran is a man-made document: the contents of the Quran could have been composed by any man on the basis of readily available religious materials, and there is no good reason why supernatural agency should be presumed or even suspected.

Furthermore, we have reached the conclusion that any Scripture in which God finds it necessary to defend His Word against accusations of forgery, is a forgery.

Finally, as the Quran is patently based on Jewish-Christian teachings which rightfully belong to the Jewish and Christian people, its unauthorised use of such material constitutes an unlawful misappropriation of intellectual and Spiritual property which is a criminal offence. This legally and morally entitles Jews and Christians to an immediate restitution of the misappropriated property and a substantial monetary compensation.

What about the visions?

We have already explained the presence of religious teachings in the Quran. How do we explain Mohammad's visions and prophecies? The answer is simple enough. They were his mind's interpretation of religious teachings received from Jews, Christians and other believers with

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whom he had come into contact. Following his marriage to his wealthy first wife, he had ample time to dedicate himself to religion and develop a frame of mind conducive to religious visions.

The consideration of the following points will remove the last doubts from the mind of the reflective enquirer:

1. Like many other young Arabs, Mohammad was an impressionable and imaginative man. Having heard and memorised all kinds of religious teachings and stories from an early age, many of which revolved on a religious figure claiming to be a God-sent prophet, it was only natural for his active mind to work along those lines especially in the absence of any other education. It must be remembered that Mohammad though intelligent, was a simple, uneducated and illiterate man.

2. Mohammad was an orphan. His father had died before he was born and his mother died when he was about six. These events must have had a psychological impact on such a young child.

3. Also of interest is the fact that he had a history of seizures in his early childhood, episodes of which returned to plague him in his adult years. This may be indicative of a paranoid disposition or some other consciousness-altering condition.

4. Although Mohammad married a total of twelve women, he only had three daughters and two sons who died at an early age. The death of both his sons and his inability to produce more children despite his custom of spending every night with one of his wives suggests that he may have suffered from some genetic defect or physiological malfunction – which appears to have been inherited by his daughters. At any rate, the early death of his two sons must have contributed to his general tendency towards mental and emotional instability. Indeed, the failure to produce male offspring would have been a heavy social stigma in a society where daughters had little value and baby girls were routinely buried in the sand at birth.

5. It is generally accepted that the death of Mohammad's first wife was a very traumatic experience to him. Given the age difference, she possibly represented a form of mother-figure the death of which must have brought back painful memories of his real mother's demise in his early childhood. The fact that Mohammad went on to marry twelve more times, clearly constitutes a conscious or subconscious attempt to compensate for this loss.

6. Indeed, one would expect a man plagued by a range of personal traumas to develop some kind of conscious or subconscious compensation mechanism. In Mohammad's case, this mechanism consisted in a keen interest in wealth (he married a wealthy widow almost twice his age and later raided and imposed "religious tax" or "jizya" on innocent Jewish and Christian tribes and caravans); he adopted the boy Zayd as a substitute for his natural sons; he exhibited a prominent interest in perfumes (which he applied in profuse quantities); women (he married twelve women in addition to indulging in intercourse with female slaves and war captives, and developed a fascination for the little girl Aishah whom he married at the age of six and deflowered at the age of nine); power (he became more and more concerned with establishing his authority to the point where he killed or sentenced to death two singing-girls for laughing at him and set up an army to impose his rule over the whole country).

7. Finally, **religion**. Mohammad's interest in **religion** is very important. Interest in religion may indicate a healthy sense of curiosity and desire to know the truth. However, in some cases, it

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may be symptomatic of mental imbalance. The sufferer is aware of the fact that his mind is not working quite as it should. He then instinctively turns to religion as a means of regaining his balance. However, without proper guidance, his very condition prevents him from distinguishing between religious or Spiritual fact on one hand, and faith-inspired fantasy, on the other.

This explains why, throughout history, religion has generated so many cases of mental derangement many of which involved religion-inspired visions. We must remember that Mohammad himself had to fend off accusations of mental imbalance and initially doubted his own sanity. Reassurances such as, "By the pen, you are not mad" are found throughout the Quran.

Indeed, recent scientific research has established that hearing voices which are experienced as coming from someone other than oneself is a relatively common phenomenon, the difference between sanity and insanity consisting in the way the sufferer is able (or unable) to identify such auditory experiences as the by-product of his own thought processes. What is certain is that an individual with Mohammad's background would naturally have been inclined towards a religious interpretation of such experiences.

It is instructive to observe in this context that Mohammad's claims to prophethood were far from unique. There were others who considered themselves "Messengers of God", among them an Arab Christian of the name Maslama, whom Mohammad called a liar. This was exactly what Mohammad himself was called by others for most of his life.

At any rate, what must be regarded as established from the above facts is that Mohammad's general state of mind would have been conducive to precisely the kind of "visions" and "voices" he is said to have experienced.

The motive

In what has gone before we have established Mohammad's religious background and mental state as the primary prompting causes for his claims to divine prophecy. However, another important motive needs to be addressed in order to obtain a better understanding of events.

A salient element of Arab culture is a peculiar sense of honour. Arabs would rather die or kill than "lose their honour". "Honour killings" are every-day occurrences throughout the Arab world. Being accused of insanity or fraud would certainly have posed a serious threat to Mohammad's sense of honour, which is precisely why he wanted to kill himself.

The only alternative to taking his own life would have been to accept his delusion as genuine divine inspiration, a choice he was encouraged to make by his own wife who apparently was the first to accept her husband's prophetic mission. Says Mohammad: "She believed in me when I was rejected. When they called me a liar, she declared that I was truthful". It is difficult to see on what basis the wife regarded herself as qualified to make such judgements and even more difficult how an "apostle of God" came to rely on his wife in these matters. What is evident is that the wife herself had little choice. What normal wife would let her husband commit suicide?

Thus the perpetuation of this self-deception became the central core of a survival strategy that many other couples would have adopted in similar circumstances. As a result, the wife kept her young husband (he was her junior by about 15 years), Mohammad kept his honour and his life, and mankind was presented with a new religion in addition to the already-existing ones.

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Is there anything in the Quran that supports such a deception? Yes. One of the most striking features of the Quran is its extraordinary defensiveness and protectiveness of Mohammad's authority, status and image. Thus it declares: "Prophet, of all believers you alone may take the wives to whom you have granted dowries and the slave-girls whom God has given you as booty, and the daughters of all your uncles and aunts and any believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet and whom the Prophet wishes to take in marriage. This privilege is yours alone".

To others, the Quran says: "Let those who disobey his orders beware, lest some affliction or some woeful scourge be visited upon them"; "submit yourself to his teachings or else you will be wiped out or changed into detestable apes"; "wage war on the unbelievers (Mohammad's opponents) all around"; "this is not a forgery in which others have helped him"; "he is not mad"; "he does not speak out of his own fancy"; "he has not invented it himself"; "he is not lying"; "he is not a madman taught by others" and so on. And to Mohammad's wives, the Quran says: "Behave yourselves or we shall exchange you for better, more obedient ones"; "those of you who commit any shameful act will receive a double punishment", etc.

It appears that God had to go to extraordinary lengths to defend His supposed apostle, even to the point where He admits changing some of His own verses to defend Mohammad against accusations of forgery: "When we change one verse for another, they say, You are an impostor" – says God (16:101). All such verses were revealed by God to Mohammad - and to him only - exactly when it was most convenient for him to impose or defend his authority. Even in 7th century Arabia, there were few who were prepared to take the Quran seriously unless they were made to or had some vested interest in doing so. As for present-day men and women, those who do not see the Quran as a thinly-veiled defence of Mohammad's delusional ego may be far blinder than they think.

Mohammad the Apostate

The Quran accuses the adherents of Arabian religion of "idolatry" or "idol-worship". Such accusations are of particular concern for several very important reasons: (1) they led to the extermination of the Pagan community of Arabia and other countries, (2) they are often brought against present-day religions which include the use of images in their worship, in particular, Hinduism and (3) they serve to conceal or cover up Mohammad's own disloyalty to his ancestral faith.

To begin with, it is difficult at present to ascertain beyond reasonable doubt whether such Quranic accusations had any basis in fact. The possibility cannot be ruled out, that they represent polemical statements intended to denigrate, and lure believers away from, their native faith.

To be sure, the native religion of Arabia in Mohammad's time was a form of polytheism similar to the Hindu faith of India and certain other traditions of Ancient Middle East and Asia. The Principal Deity of Arabia appears to have been connected with the Moon just as Lord Shiva in Hinduism and Yoga, Whose emblem is the Crescent Moon.

Although other Deities were worshipped in their own right, the fact is that they were regarded as Children, Creations or Manifestations of the Supreme God – again as in the tradition of Shiva where the Gods are Manifestations of the Supreme. Indeed, many Arabs were in practice monotheists who revered the Main God (Allah) above all others. It is difficult to see how the use

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of Idols or Divine Images could have offended Mohammad who was himself from a Pagan background. Christians, after all, also used statues and icons, and Muslims honour the Black Stone at Mecca (an ancient Pagan idol) to this day.

What is certain is that Judaism and Christianity were better organised and more focused on the worship of One God. More importantly, they were based on a Book (Scripture) which Arabs did not possess and which must have exerted a strong fascination on the illiterate Mohammad. Moreover, they were associated with power, wealth and authority which would have appealed to somebody of Mohammad's psychological disposition.

Given Mohammad's lack of formal education, it would have been difficult for him to acquire much authority in religious matters within his own Pagan denomination. As a champion of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, however, he had a good chance of success, particularly in view of the fact that he was counting on the support of the influential Jewish and Christian communities of Arabia. As it happened, these communities actually rejected his claims to Spiritual authority and denounced him as a false prophet.

Indeed, the impression obtained from the evidence of the Quran is that Mohammad may not have initially been a Muslim in the modern sense of the word at all. Rather, it seems probable that he began his religious career as a **convert to Judaism** who accepted some of the teachings of the Christians (in particular, of the Nestorian Church) in addition to those of the Torah. As the word "Muslim" literally designates one who submits or resigns himself to God, it may perfectly well apply to a person who accepts the Jewish Faith. "Before this there was the Book of Moses and this Book confirms it in Arabic", says the Quran. It is clear from the Quranic text that Mohammad regarded himself as a man who knew and followed the Jewish Scriptures as opposed to other Arabs who did not. If we further consider that Islam observes the Jewish practice of circumcision and prohibition of representational art; that Mohammad initially accepted Jerusalem as the holy city of his faith; that he supposedly ascended to heaven in Jerusalem; that he was constantly praising the Jewish prophets; and that he had the custom of fasting on the Jewish Day of Atonement which is the most important religious fast of the Jewish calendar; it becomes evident that he was, for all practical purposes, a practising Jew.

Due to the fact that Jews and Christians alike rejected his prophetic claims, however, he subsequently turned against these denominations and proclaimed the supremacy of Islam, that is, his own interpretation of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, over all other faiths. This explains the struggle for power that Mohammad first initiated within the Pagan denomination and subsequently extended to other religions in Arabia and beyond.

It also explains why the Quran says that "there are no other books like the Torah and the Quran", on one hand, and that "Jews are deceitful", advising believers "not to take them as their friends", on the other hand. Although it appears difficult, at first, to gauge what his actual position was, the situation becomes clear when we follow Quranic chapters and verses not in their present sequence but in what must be regarded as their true historical order.

Given that the majority of the World population is non-Muslim, other denominations' views of Islam must be taken into consideration, there being no justification for the imposition of Islamic interpretations of events on the entire human race.

In order to acquire a more complete and accurate understanding of facts, therefore, it is imperative to consider that, in religious terms, if Mohammad was a Prophet from the perspective

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of Islam, he was an **Apostate** from the perspective of Judaism and Christianity. Above all, he was an Apostate from the perspective of the Ancestral Faith of his own people, that is to say he was **a defector from the right faith and guilty of treason and unfaithfulness to God, which is a great sin.**

The causes of Apostasy and False belief

If it is so obvious that the Quran is man-made, why do some people still believe in its authenticity? We must remember that even in Mohammad's days most people rejected his teachings until they were physically eliminated, silenced, forced or otherwise enticed to accept his authority. Moreover, the fact is that people believe all kinds of things for all kinds of reasons - psychological, financial, political, etc. - that have nothing to do with the veracity or otherwise of their beliefs. With regard to the Quran, the principal causes are the following:

1. Ignorance. Most people who believe in the divine origin of the Quran have not read it. They believe simply because they have been preconditioned to believe.

Even those who have read the Quran, have been unable to do so in a critical and objective manner as they have been conditioned, from an early age, to look upon it as the "Word of God". As most people do not understand the mechanism of psychological preconditioning they are unable to de-condition themselves. Moreover, few of those who read the Quran bother to read other Scriptures. Hence they are incapable of forming an informed opinion on the subject. Indeed, in many Islamic countries, it is difficult to gain access to non-Islamic Scriptures.

Another form of ignorance is Muslim people's belief that by following Islam they submit to God. In reality, as there is no evidence that the Quran was revealed by God, Muslims submit not to God but to the teachings of Mohammad who may not have been the prophet he claimed to be.

As far as converts to Islam are concerned, the vast majority of them have no proper knowledge of their own religious traditions. This creates a psychological and Spiritual vacuum in their life which they consciously or subconsciously struggle to fill by any means. Their own tradition being often belittled or otherwise undermined and rejected by society, they turn to Islam to which they are attracted by its followers' firm belief in God, its often-justified criticism of Western values, etc. As hungry babies take anything into their mouth in the belief or hope that it is food, such people absorb the teachings of Islam in the erroneous belief that they have found the right faith.

In our own case, knowledge of other religious traditions has enabled us to place the Quran in the right perspective and reject the notion that its teachings are superior to those of other Scriptures. Without such knowledge, however, many are tempted to follow the wrong path. Thus the first cause for believing in the Quran is ignorance.

2. Fear. The second cause is fear. Non-Muslims may be afraid of Islam and submit to its rule out of fear, as a conscious or unconscious survival-strategy. They do not realise that they should fear God more than Islam and follow the True Faith instead which is the Universal Faith of Mankind established by God Himself at the beginning of time. Conversely, Muslims may be afraid of corruption by "Western values" and uncritically adhere to the teachings of the Quran as something familiar and "safe".

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Furthermore, it is illegal in Islamic countries to renounce Islam. Disbelieving in the Quran would amount to apostasy and may be punishable by death. Even in non-Islamic countries, Muslims are afraid of renouncing their beliefs for fear of being murdered by other Muslims. Similarly, in repressive Western countries, non-Muslims may refrain from expressing doubts in the authenticity of the Quran for fear of either being attacked by Muslims or prosecuted under pro-Islamic laws imposed by left-wing-liberalist politicians.

It is instructive to note in this context, that in June 2005, 20-year old Adrian Marriot was shot dead by a Muslim gang in Brixton, South London (UK), for refusing to convert to Islam. If this is happening in non-Muslim countries, one can easily imagine how great the fear must be in populations with a Muslim majority where there is practically no escape from the clutches of Islam.

3. Anger. Anger is another important cause. Muslims and non-Muslims alike may be angry at Western aberrations such as rampant Capitalism, oppressive Communism, inconsistent Christianity and immoral Unbelief, and turn to Islam as a means of expressing their anger and "punish the West". What they don't realise is that Islam itself is a Western tradition, based on Jewish-Christian, that is, Western values and therefore is part and parcel of Western culture. For example, they see the American war on Iraq and other Islamic countries but they do not see the Islamic war on India: millions of innocent Hindus have been killed or enslaved since the first Islamic attacks on India in the Middle Ages and even today, tens of thousands of Kashmiri Hindus are killed and many more forced to flee their homes. Although Islamic criticism against the West is sometimes justified, the fact remains that, as part of the Western Malaise, Islam is part of the problem and not the solution.

4. Pride. Finally, there is the element of pride. In the Islamic World, countries like Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, for example, have not got much to offer apart from their religion or religious fundamentalism with which they completely identify. So long as they adhere to the Quran, which they erroneously perceive as being superior to other Scriptures, their sense of identity and self-esteem is preserved. And because few humans voluntarily give up something they identify with, there is little hope of change.

Of course, if Muslims understood that the Quran was inspired by other Western Scriptures, they would soon realise the fallacy of their anti-Western position. Moreover, if they stopped criticising other faiths and examined themselves, they might start seeing their own faults. Yet ignorance prevents them from seeing the truth while fear, anger, pride and so forth prevent them from admitting it even if they saw it.

The origin of Ignorance according to Yoga

Where does ignorance come from? God created Heaven and Earth. However, knowing that some Souls would stray from the Right Path (Sat Dharma) God also created Hell as a place of Ignorance and Darkness where erring Souls are sent for punishment and correction, and where they are held so as not to contaminate the righteous, until all errors have been removed from the sinners' heart.

Thus Heaven is based on Knowledge, Hell is based on Ignorance and Earth which is situated between the two, is based on a combination of Knowledge and Ignorance.

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Those who live on Earth must choose between Knowledge and Ignorance. If they choose Knowledge, they are elevated to the Heavenly Spheres where they enjoy a life of bliss. If they choose Ignorance, they sink into the Nether Regions of existence where they live a life of pain.

It is imperative to understand that God is the Supreme Principle of Goodness, Justice and Compassion. He instructs man as to what is right and what is wrong and then lets him decide. On the basis of man's decision, God then rewards or punishes man exactly according to his deeds, in an absolutely fair, just and impartial manner. While God is the Supreme Lawmaker and Chief Lord of Justice (Dharma-Rajah), man has the freedom to choose between right and wrong, belief and disbelief, Knowledge and Ignorance.

Therefore, God never punishes people for being ignorant. But He does punish them for choosing Ignorance (Ajnana) over Knowledge (Jnana). While innate ignorance is innocent and blameless, deliberate ignorance is a self-propagating negative energy that is responsible for much evil in the World.

Blind belief is deliberate ignorance

God has given us reason that we might think rightly and find out which Scripture is true and which is false. Those who have neither sufficient power of reason nor Knowledge, must follow those who do. This is the Eternal Law of the Universe (Dharma). It is man's duty to use his reason and find out what is the **Right Belief (Sat Darshana)**. On the basis of Right Belief he will then acquire **Right Knowledge (Sat Jnana)** and on the basis of Right Knowledge he will engage in **Right Conduct (Sat Achara)**. Thus he attains happiness in this life and the next, and not in any other way.

The Quran itself declares: "Show us a book that is a better guide and we will follow you". This is a clear invitation not to follow Scripture blindly but to compare various Scriptures and follow that among them which is the better guide.

To the extent that Muslims refuse to study other Scriptures beside the Quran, they are guilty of disobeying the Command of God, though they may not realise it. We, on our part, have faithfully followed the Command of God and can show you not just one but many books that are a better guide: they are the Scriptures of the East.

Are Eastern Scriptures not man-made?

The Islamic World has only one Scripture, the Quran, which is based on the Bible and the Torah - which are fundamentally the same tradition. The East, on the other hand, has many Scriptures and there is a clear distinction between them according to authorship. Thus (1) some may be Revealed Scripture (Shruti), that is, direct records of divine revelation or works written under Divine inspiration, (2) others may be Received Scripture (Smriti), that is, a combination of divine revelation or inspiration and popular mythological accounts. Others are clearly man-made. False Scriptures are known as Moha Shaastra or Deluded Scriptures.

What matters, in the final analysis, is not whether a book is man-made but whether its contents are wise. The content of Eastern Scriptures, including those that are man-made, is wise. This is because even those that are man-made are made by men of higher knowledge: Scholars, Philosophers, Saints, God-Seers and Enlightened Souls.

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In contrast, the Quran is the work of only one man, perhaps with some help from religious teachers and poets. The main author of the Quran was neither a scholar, nor a philosopher, nor a saint, nor a God-seer, nor even an Enlightened man. Indeed, Mohammad himself admits to being just an ordinary man. Chapter 6, verse 50 of the Quran says: "I do not claim to possess God's treasures or know what is hidden, nor do I claim to be an Angel". **In other words, he had no special knowledge.**

By all accounts, Mohammad was an uneducated, illiterate man. As demonstrated by his initial doubts, he was in no position to tell whether his visions were really divinely revealed or the product of his own mind. Nor were the people around him any better for they, too, had no formal education or training. After all, Mohammad himself calls them "ignorant". So, we are dealing with a Spiritually ignorant man surrounded by other ignorant men.

The "divinely-revealed" Quran did nothing to change this general state of ignorance. It failed to enlighten and elevate the people of Arabia. Medicine, philosophy, logic, mathematics, were introduced to the Arabs as "foreign sciences" imported from India and Persia. Arithmetic in early Islamic works is referred to as "Indian calculations" ("hisab al-Hindi") while what Westerners erroneously call "Arabic numerals" were to Arabs "Indian figures" ("arqam al-Hind"), universally accepted as the "creation of Indian philosophers". As Ibn Khaldun states in his "Muqquadimah" (written in 1390), "the Arabs first learned about science **from the Indians** along with their figures and methods of calculation, **in the year 776 CE**".

At this point, we invite all thinking men and women in the World, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, to pause for a moment and think: Is it not strange how Indian Hindus, who were supposed to be "ignorant idol-worshippers", were in possession of such advanced knowledge, whereas Arab Muslims who supposedly had the "infallible and God-given guidance of the Quran", were not?

Should not the divine wisdom of the Quran have enabled Muslims to come by such knowledge without taking it from others? Reason tells us that it should have, had the Quran been truly divinely revealed. There is supposed to be no other guide like the Quran. Yet the Islamic World turned to Hindu India and Zoroastrian Persia for guidance in medicine, science, logic, mathematics, philosophy and arts. This being so, Muslims should have turned to India and Persia for Spiritual guidance, too. In so doing, they would only have followed the Quran which says: "Show us a better guide and we shall follow you".

Indeed, the East, in particular India, has a long-established tradition of philosophical and analytical thinking. Popular religion, mythology and superstition aside, India has a tradition of verifying religious statements by means of logic-based argumentation and Spiritual experimentation.

As an example of the razor-sharp mind of Indian thinkers, the 4th century philosopher Vasubandhu, had the following to say on the indivisibility of atoms: "If an atom is indivisible, then it cannot be made up of smaller parts. But if the atom has no parts that occupy a portion of space, then the atom itself can occupy no space. And if the atom occupies no space then no object made of atoms can occupy any space. It follows that neither indivisible atoms nor objects made of such atoms have any existence in the real world" (Vimshikavritti 11-14).

In Indian philosophy, physical objects are divisible into tinier and tinier parts until they become so subtle as to be indistinguishable from, and hence identical with, the intelligence that perceives

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or conceives them. Individual intelligences in turn are reduced to the Infinite Intelligence of God which alone remains as the all-supporting, all-encompassing, changeless and eternal Ultimate Reality and Ground of all experience. Western thought has not quite advanced this far, although physics certainly points in that direction. But, one millennium and a half after Vasubandhu, Western scientists have finally seen the fallacy of their belief in "indivisible atoms"!

The eminent Orientalist and scholar, Paul Deussen, therefore, says the following with regard to Indian Scriptures: "On the tree of Indian wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy. This system was brought to its consummate form by the great Shankara [8th century philosopher, author, poet, Yogi and Spiritual Teacher] and **deserves to be widely studied in the Occident**...The philosophy of the Indians must become, for every one who takes any interest in the investigation of truth, an **object of the highest interest**; for Indian philosophy is, and will be, the only possible parallel to what so far Europeans have considered as philosophy" (1906-1907).

Another great figure among the wise men of India was the illustrious Kashmiri philosopher and Spiritual Master, Abhinava Gupta. Nor are the Upanishads the only Scriptures of India. There are other wonderful and inspiring holy books such as the Shiva Rahasya, Vayaviya-Samhita (of the Shiva Mahapurana), Yoga Sutra, Yoga Vasishta, Bhagavat Gita, Guru Granth Sahib, Dhammapada and countless others of which some have acquired worldwide renown and others are still waiting to be discovered and explored by seekers of truth.

The Quran says: "If you doubt what we have revealed to Our servant (Mohammad), produce one chapter comparable to it" (2:23). We invite all thinking men and women in the World to read any of the above Scriptures and see for themselves. The Yoga Tradition itself is more than comparable to Islam: it was revealed by God; it is based on the Ten Rules (5 Yamas and 5 Niyamas, which are analogous to the Laws of Moses); it teaches a clear eightfold path to Salvation; it teaches man to believe in God and do good works; its followers live in Unity with Divine Command; its highest Goal is Union with the Supreme; and it is the most peace-loving faith in the World. What more can one expect?

Why then does Islam attack us as "unbelievers"? Is it because we do not accept Mohammad as a prophet? If that is the case, we are also entitled to call the followers of Islam "unbelievers", seeing that they reject our own Holy Prophets (Rishis) and Gurus.

The fact is that the timeless Spirituality of India has inspired millions of people from all countries and continues to do so. Even Western science has been forced to acknowledge the health-promoting properties of Yoga postures and psychological benefits of meditation. Age-old Indian medicines are being reproduced in the pharmaceutical laboratories of the West. If Indian Scriptures were composed by highly-intelligent and erudite people and then scrutinised by generations of other highly-intelligent and erudite people, then logically speaking, they must be of quite a different order and caliber than the Quran which has never been subjected to systematic critical analysis. This in itself constitutes a very strong reason to give the Scriptures of India the benefit of the doubt.

The Islamic Wonder

Even if the Quran is not divinely revealed, does not Islamic Civilisation prove that Islam is not such a bad thing? Well, in the light of what has been said above, it is doubtful whether any such thing as "Islamic Civilisation" ever existed.

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It is claimed by Islamist scholars and their left-wing supporters that Islam gave civilisation to the West. If, in answer to this, we reply that there already was an ancient civilisation in the West long before Islam – see Egypt, Greece, Rome – they will change their tune and claim that Western civilisation was, indeed, there before Islam but was lost and Islam recovered and returned it to the West.

The questions we would like to ask the esteemed scholars are: (1) If this civilisation was lost, where did Islam recover it from? (2) By whom exactly was it brought back to the West? (3) What were the circumstances in which it was brought back? (4) Was it brought back in its entirety or selectively, leaving out the most important, Spiritual elements?

The fact is that most of the knowledge in question was plundered from the libraries and schools of the countries the Muslim armies invaded. We only need to mention a few of the ancient seats of learning conquered by Islam: Alexandria in Egypt (whose library alone housed 1 million volumes), Gondeshapur in Persia, Harran in Turkey, Nalanda in India. Islamic scholars may have brought some of this knowledge to the West but only after it had been plundered from the nations conquered by Islamic forces.

Not only this, but most of the works brought by Islam to the West were concerned with medicine, mathematics and other worldly sciences. We have been unable to trace any significant work on the pre-Islamic religion of Arabia and other Muslim-occupied countries. The Spiritual heritage of the subjugated nations, which represents a people's very heart and soul, was largely neglected or suppressed. Was non-Islamic Spirituality suppressed in order to conceal its superiority over Islamic dogma? We believe that it was. If the worldly knowledge of non-Islamic nations was so superior to its Islamic counterpart as for Muslims to adopt it wholesale, this suggests that non-Islamic Spirituality may have been equally superior to its Islamic counterpart. This is precisely why it was suppressed.

Even in Arab-occupied South Spain (Andalusia) – which is much advertised in pro-Islamic propaganda literature as a prime example of Islamic superiority over other cultures – the situation was far from being as idyllic and romantic as claimed. First of all, what apologists of Islamic Imperialism conveniently forget is that the Islamic conquest of Spain was an act of unjustified and illegal aggression against a peaceful population. This would have entailed the killing of all Spanish men who resisted the invasion, the rape and forced marriage of Spanish women, and other atrocities. Secondly, society under Muslim occupation was based on a hierarchy of Arab rulers, North African Berber military and converted Spaniards, while the non-Muslim population constituted the oppressed bulk of the nation. Arabic was imposed as the official language in all occupied territories. The native population was forced to wear clothes which marked them out as non-Muslims. They were forced to pay religious tax to the Arab rulers. Just as in present-day Saudi Arabia, non-Muslims were prohibited from building places of worship. Non-Islamic thought was one minute barely tolerated and actively suppressed the next, as evidenced by the destruction of another famous library, at Cordoba (400,000 books in total), on the orders of the local Muslim ruler. Indeed, as in all other parts of the Islamic Empire, Islamic rule became more and more fanatical and oppressive. It was not without reason that the Muslim invaders were finally expelled from Spain and eventually from the rest of occupied Europe!

The bottom line is that what is being advertised as "Islamic Civilisation" is in reality nothing but a collection of cultural elements borrowed by the Islamic Entity from the nations it had subjugated and made into a confused and confusing jumble called "Islamic this and Islamic that". No sooner did philosophy, science, logic, mathematics and other "foreign sciences" - as they were

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derogatorily called - find a foothold on Islamic soil than they came under fierce attack from reactionary Islamists, with the effect that schools began to be closed down by the authorities throughout the Islamic World, to be replaced by Taliban-style institutions of religious fundamentalist indoctrination.

The fact is that the population of Arabia was simply too small and uneducated to produce the kind of international scholarship ascribed to it. Most "Islamic scholars" were in fact Persians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and other nationals who had adopted Arab names and professed Islamic beliefs because that was the only way they could gain recognition under oppressive Islamic rule.

This fact is perfectly illustrated by the citizens of Harran, a prosperous trade centre and long-established seat of ancient wisdom, who though they were clearly Pagans, idol-worshippers and possessed no book (Scripture) in the Islamic sense, yet professed to be Sabians (a faith mentioned in the Quran) in order to meet Quranic requirements of a "people of the Book", and thus were spared from being slaughtered. They were later instrumental in supplying the Islamic Empire with the knowledge and culture Islam subsequently - and falsely - claimed as its own creation.

If a man were to rob others and walk about dressed in his victims' clothes and jewellery, should we praise him for his fine taste and enterprising spirit or should we denounce him as a criminal and return the stolen goods to their rightful owners?

In the final analysis, the famous "Islamic arabesques" are demonstrably Byzantine (Graeco-Roman) in origin; even mosques and the allegedly "Islamic" Taj Mahal are largely modelled on the Byzantine Church of St Sophia at Constantinople (present-day "Istanbul"); "Islamic" miniature paintings are likewise Byzantine in origin, with Persian and Chinese influence; "Arabic numerals" are Indian as are many "Arabian" fables and tales. And so it goes on. Most of what goes by the name of "Islamic civilisation" was made up of elements looted from their rightful owners and squandered away as quickly as the ill-gained treasures of pirates and highwaymen.

Thus while the great civilisations of India, Persia and Egypt endured for millennia, the "Wonder of Islam" was over in a matter of centuries. The fact is that Islam simply owes too much to other traditions to stand on its own feet. Remove the non-Arab elements (Roman, Greek, Persian, Egyptian, Indian and Chinese) and the "Islamic Wonder" will unravel like any old rag or an illusionist's trick. Take the Jewish-Christian Angel, Gabriel, the Garden of Eden or Paradise, and all the other biblical material out of the Quran and the Islamic miracle will vanish into thin air.

Conclusion

We have spoken much about prophet Mohammad and his role in the creation of the Quran. Let us now turn our attention to his last days. Traditional records relate that he was given a dish of mutton laced with poison by a Jewish woman in retaliation for his enslaving and robbing her people. Whatever we think of his life, we must admit that his death was a strange reward for an "apostle of God".

If we think about it, if the God of Islam couldn't even save his apostle, how will he save others? We must not allow the tragedy of one man to become the tragedy of the entire human race.

THE TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM

Arabs may be "ignorant" as the Quran describes them. But they are an intelligent and capable people who deserve better. It is time for them to cast off the shackles of false leaders and false beliefs. They must shed their pride and put on the mantle of humility and truth and admit that they have erred. And, having confessed and repented, let them listen to the Supreme Being's Message of Unity and Truth and follow His Eternal Way. For Shiva's Way is the Glorious Road to Heaven which God Himself revealed at the beginning of time and all true believers have trodden ever since.

We would like to remind the Muslims of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Kashmir, in particular, that Islam is not their original faith but a religion brought by Colonialist forces which invaded India from the West and adopted by their ancestors out of fear for their life. We therefore invite them to desist from perpetuating a past injustice and return to their ancestral faith so that the noble People of India may once again be a strong, prosperous and united nation and a proud example to the World.
